

The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

The Well-Known Novelist and the
Creator of the "Craig Kennedy" Stories

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SYNOPSIS.

The New York police are mystified by a series of murders and other crimes. The principal clue to the criminal is the warning letter which is sent to the victims, signed with a "clutching hand." The latest victim of the mysterious assassin is Taylor Dodge, the insurance president. His daughter, Elaine, employs Craig Kennedy, the famous scientific detective, to try to unravel the mystery. What Kennedy accomplishes is told by his friend Jameson, a newspaper man. After many fruitless attempts to put Elaine and Craig Kennedy out of the way the Clutching Hand is at last found to be none other than Perry Bennett, Elaine's lawyer and the man she is engaged to marry. Bennett flees to the den of one of his Chinese criminals. The Chinaman forces from Bennett the secret of the whereabouts of \$100,000. Then he gives the lawyer a portion which will suspend animation for months. Kennedy reaches Bennett's side just after he has lost consciousness.

EIGHTEENTH EPISODE

THE VENGEANCE OF WU FANG.

Elaine was still in the power of Wu Fang. Kennedy had thwarted the Chinese master criminal in his search for the millions amassed by the Clutching Hand. But any joy that he might have derived from this success was completely obscured by the fear that Wu might wreak some diabolical vengeance on Elaine.

Nor were Kennedy's fears unfounded. Wu and Long Sin had scarcely reached the secret apartment when the subtle Chinaman began to contemplate revenge.

Long Sin was smoking a Chinese pipe, resting after their hurried flight, while Wu, the tireless, was seated at a table at the other end of the room. At last Wu Fang took up a long Chinese dirk from the table before him, looked at it, turned it over, felt its edge. He rose and deliberately walked across to a door leading into a back room.

On a couch lay Elaine, and with her, as a guardian, was Weepy Mary.

As Wu, the Serpent, entered and advanced slowly toward Elaine, she crouched back from him in deadly fear.

Slowly he drew from under his robe the Chinese dirk. He felt the edge of it again and gazed significantly at Elaine.

It was a critical moment.

Just then Long Sin entered. "One of the five millions waits outside," he reported simply, with a bow.

Wu understood. It had been a pleasant fiction of his that although he did not, of course, absolutely control such a stupendous organization, he could, by his subtle power, force almost unlimited allegiance from the simple coolies in that district of China from which he came.

Out in the front room, just a moment before, a knock at the door had disturbed Long Sin, and a Chinese servant had announced a visitor. Long Sin had waved to the servant to usher him in, and a poorly clad coolie had entered.

He bowed as Long Sin faced him. "Where is the master?" he had asked.

Long Sin had not deigned to speak. With a mere wave of his hand he indicated that he would be the bearer of the message, and had followed Wu through the door of the back room.

So, almost by chance, Wu was interrupted in the brutal vengeance which had first come to his mind. He sheathed the knife and, still without a word, went back into the main room, giving a nod to Weepy Mary to guard Elaine closely.

Wu eyed the coolie until the newcomer could almost feel the master's penetrating gaze, although his head was bowed in awe. Quickly the coolie thrust his hand under his blouse and drew forth a package. With another bow he advanced.

"For your enemies, O master," he said, handing the package over to Wu.

The coolie started to open the package, removed the paper wrapper, and then a silk wrapping inside. Finally he came to a box, from which he drew a leather pouch, each operation conducted with greater care as it became evident that the contents were especially precious in some way. Then he took from the pouch a small vial.

"What is it?" demanded Wu Fang, as the coolie displayed it.

The coolie drew forth now a magnifying glass and a glass slide. Opening the vial with great care he shook something out on the slide, then held it under the lens.

"Look!" he said simply.

Wu bent over and looked. Under the lens what had formerly seemed to be merely a black speck of dirt became now one of the most weird and uncanny little creatures to be found in all the realm of nature. It seemed to be all legs and feelers moving at once. A normal person would have looked at the creature only with the greatest repugnance. Wu regarded it with a sort of unholy fascination.

"And it is?" he queried.

"What the white man calls the African tick which carries the recurrent fever," answered the coolie deferentially.

A flash of intense exultation seemed to darken Wu Fang's sinister face.

"Wait," he said to the coolie, as he

moved slowly again into the back room.

Long Sin had remained there. With Weepy Mary he was guarding Elaine, when Wu Fang re-entered. Elaine was thoroughly aroused by this time.

"Suffering is a state of mind," Wu said in a low tone, "and I have decided that it would be poor revenge for me to harm you. You are free."

Nothing could have come as a greater surprise to Elaine.

"Do you—do you really mean it?" she asked, scarcely able to believe what her ears heard.

Wu merely nodded, and with a wave of his hand to Long Sin indicated that Elaine was to be released.

She nervously took several steps toward the door. She had scarcely crossed half the room.

"Wait!" ordered Wu sharply.

Was he merely torturing her, as a cat might torture a mouse? She stopped obediently, afraid to look at him.

"This will be the vengeance of Wu Fang," he went on impressively. "Slowly, one by one, your friends will weaken and die, then your family, until finally only you are left. Then will come your turn."

He stopped again and raised his long, lean forefinger. "Go," he hissed. "I wish you much joy."

I don't think that in all our friendship I have ever seen Kennedy so utterly depressed as he was when we returned after the discovery of the vast fortune which Bennett had cleverly secreted.

There seemed to be absolutely nothing to do until some new clue turned up. I placed my hand on his shoulder, but the words that would encourage him died on my lips. Several times I started to speak, but each time I checked myself. There did not seem to be anything that would be appropriate for such an occasion.

A sharp ring at the telephone made both of us fairly jump, so nervous had we become. Kennedy reached over instantly for the instrument in the vague hope that at last there was some news.

As I watched his face it changed first from despair to wonder, and finally it seemed to light up with the most remarkable look of relief and happiness that one could imagine.

"I shall be right over," he cried, jamming the receiver down on the hook, and in the same motion reaching for his hat and coat. "Walter," he cried, "it is Elaine! They have let her go!"

I seized my own hat and coat in time to follow him, and we dashed out of the laboratory.

The suspense under which Aunt Josephine had been living had told on



He Felt the Edge of the Dagger and Gazed Significantly at Elaine.

her. Her niece, Elaine's cousin, Mary Brown, who lived at Rockledge, had come into the city to comfort Aunt Josephine, and they had been sitting that morning in the library.

Suddenly a startled cry from Jennings out in the hall caused both ladies to jump to their feet. They could scarcely believe what they heard as the faithful old butler cried out the name.

"Why, Miss Elaine!" he gasped.

An instant later Elaine herself burst into the room and flung herself into Aunt Josephine's arms. All talking and half crying for joy at once, they crowded about her.

In the excitement Aunt Josephine had seized the telephone and called our number. She did not even wait to break the good news, but handed the telephone to Elaine herself.

We left the laboratory on the run, too fast to notice that just around the building line at the corner stood a limousine with shades drawn. Even if we had paused to glance back we

could not have seen Wu Fang and Long Sin inside gazing out through the corner of the curtains. They were in European dress now, and had evidently come prepared for just what they knew was likely to happen.

We were admitted by the faithful Jennings and almost ran into the library.

"Oh, Craig!" cried Elaine, as Kennedy, almost speechless, seized her by both hands.

For a few seconds none of us could speak. Then followed a veritable flood of eager conversation.

"Won't you come and stay with me a few days up in the country, dear?" urged Mary at last.

Elaine thought a moment, then turned to Aunt Josephine.

"Yes," considered her aunt, "I think it would do you good."

Still she hesitated, then shyly looked at Kennedy and laughed. "You, too, Craig, must be fagged out," she said, frankly. "Come up there with us and take a rest."

Kennedy smiled. "I shall be delighted," he accepted promptly.

We chatted, then left a few moments later so that Kennedy could pack.

Around the corner from the laboratory, as we dashed out, had been, as I have said, Wu Fang and Long Sin looking out from the limousine. No sooner had we disappeared across the campus than their driver started up the car and they sped around to our apartment.

Cautiously they alighted and walked down the street. Then, making sure they were not observed, they entered and mounted the stairs to our doorway. Long Sin was stationed down the hall on guard, while Wu Fang drew from his pocket a blank key, a file and a candle. He lighted the candle and held the key in its flame until it was covered with soot.

Then he inserted the key into the keyhole, turned it and took the key out. He filed the key, trying it again and again. Finally he finished and opened the door. Beckoning Long Sin, he entered our room.

As they stood there Wu Fang gazed about our living room keenly. He was evidently considering where to place something.

Finally his eye rested on the telephone. It seemed to suggest an idea to him and he crossed over to it. Carefully holding down the receiver on the hook, he unscrewed the case which holds the diaphragm, while with his clever fingers he held the rest of the instrument intact. Then he removed from his pocket the vial which the coolie had given him and placed its contents on the diaphragm itself. Quickly now he replaced the receiver and, having finished their work, Long Sin and Wu Fang stealthily crept out.

A second time, as we approached our apartment after the visit to Elaine, we were too excited to notice the limousine in which were Wu and Long Sin. But no sooner had we entered than Long Sin left the car with a final word of instruction from his master.

Upstairs, in the apartment, Kennedy began hurriedly to pack, and I helped him as well as I could. We were in the midst of it when the telephone rang and I answered it.

"Hello!" I called.

There was no response.

"Hello, hello!" I repeated, raising my voice.

Still there was no answer. I worked the hook up and down, but could get no reply, and finally, disgusted, hung up.

A moment later, I recall now, it seemed to me as though some one had stuck a pin into the lobe of my ear.

We had scarcely got back to work when the telephone bell rang again, and a second time I answered it.

"Is Mr. Kennedy there?" came back a strange voice.

I handed the instrument to Craig.

"Hello!" he called. "Who is this?"

No response.

"Hello, hello!" he shouted, working the hook as I had done and, in my case, there was still no answer.

Neither of us thought anything of it at the time, but now I recall that I did see Kennedy once or twice press the lobe of his ear as though something had hurt it.

We did not know until later that in a pay station down the street our arch enemy, Long Sin, had been calling us up and then, with a wicked smile, refusing to speak to us.

It was about a week later that I came home late one night from the Star, feeling pretty done up. Whatever it was, a violent fever seemed to have come on me suddenly. The next morning when I woke up I felt a lassitude that made it quite hard enough even to lounge about in my bathrobe. Finally, feeling no better, I decided to see a doctor. I put on my clothes with a decided effort and went out.

The nearest doctor was about half a block away and we scarcely knew him, for neither Kennedy nor I are exactly sickly.

He sounded me and pounded me, talked a little while on generalities, diet and exercise, then walked over to a cabinet, and emptied out a few pills into a little paper box.

"Take one every hour," he said. "Cut your cigarettes to three a day, and don't drink coffee. Four dollars, please."

I paid him and went back to the apartment, my head soon in a whirl from a new onset of the fever.

I managed to get back into my bathrobe, and threw myself down on the divan, propped up with pillows. I had taken the pills, but they had no more effect than sugar or milk. By this

time I was much more delirious and was crying out.

I saw faces about me, but I did not see the faces which were actually out by our hall door. Wu Fang and Long Sin had waited patiently for their revenge. Now that they thought sufficient time had elapsed, they had stolen silently to the apartment door.

While Long Sin watched, Wu listened.

"The white devil has it," whispered Wu Fang, as he rejoined his fellow conspirator.

How long I should have remained in this state, and in fact how long I did remain, I don't know. Vaguely, I recall that our acquaintance, Johnson, who had the apartment across the hall, at last heard my cries and came in.

Somehow or other I knew the state I was in. I knew it was Johnson, yet it all seemed unreal to me. With a great effort I gathered all my scattered wits and managed to shout out, "Telegraph Kennedy—Rockledge."

At about the same time, up at Rockledge, Kennedy and Elaine, with her cousin, Mary Brown, were starting out for a horseback ride through the hills. They were chatting gayly, but Kennedy was forcing himself to do so.

In fact, they had scarcely gone half a mile when Kennedy, who was riding between the two and fighting off by sheer nerve the illness he felt, suddenly fell over in half a faint on the



"Look!" Said Kennedy, Turning to His Microscope.

horse's neck. Elaine and Mary reined up their horses.

"Why, Craig," cried Elaine, startled, "what's the matter?"

The sound of her voice seemed to arouse him. He braced up. "Oh, nothing, I guess," he said with a forced smile. "I'm all right."

It was no use, however. They had to cut short the ride, and Kennedy returned to the house glad to drop down in an easy chair on the porch, while Elaine hovered about him solicitously.

They summoned the country doctor, but it took him some time to get out to the house. Suddenly a messenger boy rode up on his bicycle and mounted the porch steps. "Telegram for Mr. Kennedy," he announced, looking about and picking out Craig naturally as the person he wanted.

Kennedy nodded and took the yellow envelope while Elaine signed for it. Listlessly he tore it open. It read:

Craig Kennedy,
Care Wellington Brown,
Rockledge, N. Y.

Jameson very ill. Wants you. Better come.

The message seemed to rouse Kennedy in spite of his fever. His face showed keen alarm, which he endeavored to conceal from Elaine. But her quick eye had caught the look.

"I must see Walter," he exclaimed, rising rather weakly and going into the house.

How he ever did it is still, I think, a mystery to him, but he managed to pack up and, in spite of the alternating fever and chills, make the journey back to the city.

When at last Craig arrived at our apartment, it must have seemed to him that he found me almost at death's door.

Ill himself, Kennedy threw himself down for a moment, exhausted. "When did this thing come on, Walter?" he asked of Johnson.

"Yesterday, I think, as nearly as I can find out," replied our friend.

Craig was decidedly worried. "There's only one person in New York to call on," he murmured, pulling himself out of bed and getting into the living room as best he could.

"Is that you, Godowski?" he asked over the telephone. "Well, doctor, this is Kennedy. Come over to my apartment, quick. I've a case—two cases, for you."

Godowski was a world-famous scientist in his line and had specialized in bacteriology, mainly in tropical diseases.

As Kennedy hung up the receiver he made his way back again to the bedroom, scratching his ear. He noticed that I was doing the same in my delirium.

"Has Walter been scratching his ear?" he asked of Johnson. Johnson nodded. "That's strange," considered Craig, thoughtfully. "I've been doing the same."

He turned back into the living room and for a moment looked about. Finally his eye happened to fall on the telephone and an idea seemed to occur to him.

He went over to the instrument and unscrewed the receiver. Carefully he

looked inside. Then he looked closer. There was something peculiar about it and he picked up a blank sheet of white paper, dusting off the diaphragm on it. There, on the paper, were innumerable little black specks.

Just then, outside, Doctor Godowski's car drew up and he jumped out, swinging his black bag. Not being acquainted with what we were going through, Godowski did not notice the almond-eyed Chinaman who was watching down the street.

"How do you do, doctor?" greeted Craig faintly, at the door.

"What seems to be the difficulty?" inquired the doctor eagerly.

"I don't know," returned Craig. "but I have my suspicions. I'm too ill to verify them myself, so I've called on you. Look at Jameson first," he added.

While Godowski was examining me, Craig managed to get out his microscope and was looking through it at the strange black specks on the paper. There, under the lens, he could see the most remarkable, almost microscopic creature, all legs and feelers, a most vicious object.

Weak though he was, he could not help an exclamation of exultation at his discovery, just as Godowski had finished with me.

"Look!" he cried, calling the doctor. "I know what the trouble is, Godowski."

He had started to tell, but the ex-

mediately. Quickly she donned one of the numerous disguises, while Wu planned his campaign.

"Here," he directed when she was ready, handing her a little vial. "You must infect every instrument the doctor uses on Kennedy and Jameson—see!"

She nodded, and a moment later was on her way uptown.

Meanwhile Godowski himself had arrived at our apartment, much to the relief of our friend Johnson, and was unpacking his instruments.

Quickly he improvised two operating tables and placed one of us on each. Then, with his assistant, he put on his white robe, mask, gloves and other precautions for aseptics, setting out the apparatus for the intravenous administration of the drug that would kill the spirillum.

They had finished their preparations and were waiting for Miss Septix. "She ought to be here now," muttered Godowski impatiently, looking at his watch.

Just then a cab drove up outside.

"Perhaps that is she!" he exclaimed.

"It must be."

A few moments later the door of the apartment opened. His face showed his disappointment. It was a stranger.

"Miss Septix is ill," she introduced, "and sent me to take her place."

The doctor looked about. "Very well, then," he said briskly, seeing his preparations. "Are you ready to go ahead?"

She nodded and threw off the coat that covered her immaculate white uniform.

The specialist plunged wholeheartedly into his work of saving us now. "Hand me that needle, please," he directed the false nurse.

She moved over to the table nearby and took it up, pausing only long enough to dip it secretly into a vial she carried with her.

"Please hurry," repeated the doctor. She turned from the table and handed it to him. He adjusted it and already held it poised for the thrust which was not to cure but to poison us further.

"Weepy Mary!" cried a frightened voice at our door.

Elaine had been deeply alarmed by the sudden illness of Kennedy and the message from Jameson. No sooner had Kennedy gone than it flashed over her that Wu Fang had predicted something like this.

"The throat!" she exclaimed, seeking her cousin. "Mary, I must go to the city—right away."

On the next train, then, she had been speeding back to New York.

One glance at the improvised hospital was enough to alarm her. But the sight that had transfixed her was of a woman whose face she remembered well, though Kennedy and I had never seen her.

"Please, Miss," began Godowski's assistant, trying to quiet Elaine, while Godowski turned in vexation to his work.

"No, no!" repeated Elaine. "This woman is no nurse. She is a criminal!"

Godowski paused. It was true he did not know the woman. He gazed from Elaine to Weepy Mary in doubt.

The game was up. Weepy Mary dropped a piece of gauze which she had soaked in the solution from the vial which Wu had given her and bolted for the door.

So sudden was her flight that no one was quick enough to stop her.

The excitement, more than ever, alarmed Elaine now. "Tell me," she appealed to Doctor Godowski, "what is the matter?"

"In some way," he replied quickly, "they have become infected with the bite of an African tick which carries spirillum fever."

Godowski raised his hands in despair. "I was just about to start," he cried. "Everything is ready. I can't send for another nurse. Every minute counts."

Elaine had thrown off her coat and hat. Her sleeves were up in a moment, and before the doctor knew what she was about she was scrubbing her hands in the antiseptic wash.

"Only—show me—what to do," she cried. "I will be the nurse!"

Several days later, when he had recovered sufficiently from the diabolical attack that had been made upon us, Kennedy was again at work in the laboratory, while I was writing.

Our speaking tube sounded, and I knew that it was Elaine and Aunt Josephine.

"How do you feel?" inquired Elaine anxiously, as she almost ran across the laboratory to Craig.

"Fine!" he exaggerated, brightly.

"Really?" she repeated anxiously.

"Look!" he said, turning to his microscope.

He turned some blood from a test tube in our electric incubator and placed a drop on a slide. It was some of the blood infected by the germs carried by the tick.

"That is how our blood looked—before the new nurse arrived," he smiled, while Elaine looked at it in horror.

Then he picked his arm and let a drop smear on another slide.

"Now look at that—perfectly normal," he added.

"Oh, I'm so glad," she exclaimed radiantly.

"Normal—thanks to you. You saved us. You were just in time," cried Craig, taking both her hands in his.

He was about to kiss her, when she broke away. "Craig," she whispered, blushing and looking hastily at us.

Aunt Josephine and I could only smile at the disgusted glance Craig gave us, as he thrust his hands in his pockets and wished us a thousand miles away at that moment.

(TO BE CONTINUED)